

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY

Council of the Faculty of Engineering and Computer Science

Minutes of Meeting 96-6

held

Thursday, 5 December 1996, at 2:00 p.m. in H-769

Present: Dr. D.J. Taddeo (Chair); Dr. M.O. Ahmad; Dr. J.W. Atwood; Dr. C. Bédard; Dr. R. Bhat; Ms. C. Blaquièrre (Undergrad. Rep.); Dr. J. Campanelli; Dr. P. Fazio; Dr. C. Giguère; Dr. G. Gouw; Dr. A.M. Hanna; Ms. L. Harris (Library); Dr. V.S. Hoa; Dr. C. Lam; Dr. L. Landsberger; Ms. A. Lappos (Undergrad. Rep.); Dr. D. Probst; Dr. A.S. Ramamurthy; Dr. T. Stathopoulos; Dr. C. Suen; Dr. J. Svoboda; Dr. L. Tao; Dr. C. Trueman; Dr. G. Turski (Secretary); Dr. G. Vatisstas; Dr. R. Zmeureanu

Regrets: Ms. S. Kiruluta; Dr. A. Krzyzak; Dr. E.I. Plotkin; Dr. M. Zaheeruddin

Guests: Dr. H. McQueen; Dr. S. Kubina

1. Adoption of Agenda

Motion 96-6-1 The agenda was unanimously adopted. (C. Bédard, G. Vatisstas)

2. Adoption of Minutes

Dr. Zmeureanu noted that the publication identified in the first sentence of the third paragraph on p. 7 should be *Les Affaires*, not *La Presse*. The Secretary noted the correction.

Motion 96-6-2 The Minutes of Meeting 96-5 (25 October 1996) were unanimously approved, as modified (T. Stathopoulos, G. Gouw)

3. Chair's Remarks

The Chair provided a brief résumé of the November CEAB accreditation visit. In essence, things went quite well, if one was to judge by the preliminary comments of the Visiting Team during the exit interview. The accreditation visitors conveyed they were impressed by: 1) the Faculty's links with the outside

community, as evidenced by the newly established External Advisory Board; 2) the enthusiasm and quality of the Faculty's students; 3) the responsible and efficient management of the Faculty and the appreciation of this fact by Concordia's senior administration; and 4) the Faculty's responsiveness to the needs of the local and national industrial partners.

The Visiting Team's draft report should be received by the Faculty early in the new year, with the formal accreditation decision to be rendered in June 1997. Dr. Taddeo reiterated his gratitude to all who were involved with the accreditation exercise.

The Chair informed Council about the success of the January admission initiative. According to the latest data available, new applications for January 1997 are up by 42% and 15% in Computer Science and Engineering programs respectively, over last year's figures. Dr. Taddeo further explained that the January admissions appear to be drawing on a distinct market of students, as evidenced by the fact that the Fall 1996 admissions were not in the least adversely affected, having in fact surpassed the registration levels of the previous Fall.

4. ECE Graduate Slot Course (ECFC Doc. 96-6-1)

Dr. Stathopoulos informed that the Graduate Studies Committee has considered the proposed ECE graduate slot course *ELEC 690 XX Power System Design for Telecommunications* and is recommending to Council its adoption. There would be no resource implications issuing from this action since the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering had cancelled a previously scheduled graduate course for Winter 1997.

Motion 96-6-3 That Council endorse the recommendation from the Graduate Studies Committee and approve the graduate slot course *ELEC 690 XX Power System Design for Telecommunications* (T. Stathopoulos, G. Vatisstas)

Vote: Carried unanimously

5. Academic Planning (ECFC Doc. 96-6-2)

In introducing ECFC Doc. 96-6-2 *Academic Planning: Response to the Discussion Paper Following a Course Forward*, Dr. Taddeo expressed his gratitude to several members of the Office of the Dean for their contribution to the document. While Associate Dean Dr. Kubina provided the overall direction and the final fine-tuning for the Faculty's response to the Provost Dr. Lightstone's paper, Mike Svensson and George Turski helped out with research and data provision, and Mike Lennane handled the graphics and layout.

The Dean explained the tripartite structure of the document and gave a précis of each of its three sections. Following the **Introduction** which sets the immediate general context, **Part I** details the historical background of the Faculty's development from Concordia's inception in 1974. Of note here is the identification by the provincial government of University's engineering programs as a constituent *Grand Axe de développement* of Quebec's higher education system and the Faculty's subsequent continuous efforts to concretely fulfil the mandate assumed by this designation.

The Faculty's performance in the recent past (1989-96) is outlined in **Part II**, with the overall conclusion that its academic units compare very favourably with the rest of the University in terms of such key indicators as FTE enrolment, teaching workload, graduate thesis supervision, research productivity, fiscal responsibility, and others. **Part III** addresses the Provost's request for informed conjectures in the event of 5% and 10% increase or decrease in the Faculty's resources.

Dr. Probst sought and received clarification on the notion of adopting something in principle: to so adopt a document indicates an agreement with the major thrust of it.

Motion
96-6-4

That ECFC Doc. 96-6-2 be adopted in principle by Council (C. Giguère, T. Stathopoulos)

Dr. Lam informed that the Department of Computer Science has prepared a response to ECFC Doc. 96-6-2 and distributed a document to that effect. He explained that the department has some major difficulties with certain sections of the Faculty's response and advanced two arguments.

First, while the FTE total in the Faculty has been in recent years relatively stable, the proportion of the FTE's taught by the Computer Science Department has increased from 30% in 1992-93 to 36% in 1995-96, and a projected 39% in 1996-97. In light of this, the proposed overall distribution of the 108.5 faculty positions by the Faculty would actually decrease the percentage of those positions allocated to Computer Science.

Secondly, the department believes that every new hire should be considered as an investment in the future of the Faculty and the University, and that indeed putting resources into Computer Science programs has the best expected return on investment. With as many as 17 replacement positions foreseen in the near and mid-term future, the department thinks it would be wise to allocate to it more of those positions. Dr. Lam requested that the document he distributed be forwarded to the Provost as part of his department's response to Dr. Lightstone's Academic Plan.

Regarding teaching loads, Dr. Gouw remarked that the impending extension of the cooperative education format to the rest of the Faculty, along with new Graduate Certificate programs, are likely to increase student enrolment and thereby level out some of the current imbalances in teaching responsibilities. Dr. Atwood commented that these developments are only anticipated and conceivably may not materialize, whereas the heavy load carried by the Department of Computer Science is a present and thus unquestionable reality. In Dr. Probst's view, the expected adjustments referred to by Dr. Gouw were likely to prove marginal. He added, in a more general vein, that considering the employability of graduates should also figure (as an independent indicator) in assessing the value of various programs offered by Concordia.

Dr. Stathopoulos challenged the view that Computer Science is carrying an excessive and unfair burden. While the Computer Science programs are indeed heavily enroled, additional resources (e.g., money for part-time lecturers) have been provided to the department to offset the consequent additional responsibilities. He added that as the Associate Dean responsible for the distribution of teaching loads throughout the Faculty, he is very sensitive that this be done fairly and equitably and has made every effort to ensure this.

In Dr. Fazio's opinion the present debate regarding academic planning and resource reallocation has to proceed in two stages. In the first instance, it is critical that the Faculty's performance is duly recognized by the rest of the University and in particular the latter's top administrators, since the establishment of a level playing field is in the interest of all academic units in the Faculty and energies should not be wasted on internal debates of lesser significance. Only then can the issues internal to the Faculty be meaningfully raised. Moreover, the evolution of FTE's is only one among several indicators relevant for assessing the responsibilities and productivity of units and, as such, it cannot be the sole determinant of resource allocation.

Stating that research activities may generate significant resources and also take up much of a unit's energies, Dr. Hoa expressed sympathy with this last point. He also mentioned that Engineering programs are subject to CEAB requirements on minimum faculty contingents without which a given program will not be accredited.

While granting the argument for the necessity of using several indicators, Dr. Lam stressed the major significance of the data on FTE evolution. He added that historically the Department of Computer Science has felt that invoking the demands of accreditation in resource allocation invariably worked against his department in the process of allocating the Faculty's resources. Furthermore, the current demand for the department's offerings is such that the unit is working at full capacity and that, failing additional resources, increased enrolment is simply out of the question.

Dr. Ramamurthy provided Council with data showing the comparative strength of the Department of Civil Engineering in research and its ability to graduate Master and Ph.D. students, and that in point of fact the perception of CE as a weak department and a possible candidate for resource reduction is unwarranted. He also cautioned against taking a one-time snapshot approach to resource allocation, since a historical overview would show that certain units in the Faculty now in ascendancy were not always so fortunate but received in the past support they needed to continue and develop.

According to Dr. Giguère, a significant difference in the cultures of applied sciences on the one hand and of humanities and social sciences on the other is the major reason for a lack of consensus at Concordia on performance evaluation and resource reallocation. Dr. Giguère agreed with Dr. Probst's earlier point about the need to consider the employability of graduates as a factor in assessing the relevance of programs, but added the Faculty would be hard pressed to carry this argument successfully with others elsewhere in the University.

Dr. Svoboda remarked that some of today's "hot" disciplines, such as Computer Science, may be in lesser demand in the future, while a reverse development may await those that are currently not so popular. He cited trained engineers capable of handling hardware as a group likely to find itself within the latter trend.

In Dr. Probst's view, the Faculty should adopt a more business-like approach to the assessment of its programs. While such an approach is within a university context somewhat problematic, a lack of any assessment is even more so. Dr. Probst proposed that independently of its arguments with the rest of the University, the Faculty should develop a set of accepted criteria applicable to the performance assessment of its academic units that would allow for clear decision making in the allocation of resources, and that these criteria be operational by an agreed upon date in the future. Dr. Taddeo offered that the Associate Dean for Strategic Planning could be requested to develop a set of such criteria, to be tabled for consideration and possible modification at the March meeting of the Faculty Council.

Dr. Fazio explained that once examined more carefully, the current demand for training in Computer Science is in significant part due to professionals' (such as engineers') need to enhance their abilities in their primary disciplines, and not because they wish to become computer scientists. As such, the need to sustain and develop these disciplines remains vital. Regarding the use of the indicators for the Faculty, Dr. Fazio stated that these need to be formally recognized by the University. Dr. Giguère proposed that these indicators be in place effective the beginning of the fiscal year 1997.

Dr. Suen noted that the differences in perspectives generated by such documents as the one presented by Dr. Ramamurthy on the one hand and the data brought forth by Dr. Lam stem primarily from comparisons which do not consistently

apply the same parameters. He further emphasized that the Faculty's energies must at all cost be directed outward in its arguments with the rest of the University and the high FTE total in Computer Science used in this manner as well. Dr. Suen concluded with the statement that the current budgetary context, coupled with the increasing demands on professors to carry research and administrative functions (e.g., committee work), a critical mass of professors is needed to constitute an effective academic unit.

In consideration of the motion made (Motion 96-6-4) to adopt in principle ECFC Doc. 96-6-2, it was proposed that, as an amendment, the following statement be added to the document.

Amendment That the Faculty of Engineering and Computer Science commit to develop and adopt a set of clearly defined performance indicators that would inform the process of allocating resources among its units; that these indicators be formally recognized by the University; and that they be operational with the beginning of the next fiscal year, i.e., 1 June 1997 (D. Probst, P. Fazio)

Vote on the amendment: Carried unanimously

Vote on the motion, as amended: Carried, with two oppositions

6. Other

7. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 3:45 p.m.